

**Testimony of Allen M. MadPlume to:
State of Montana Budget Committee; Jan 25, 2007**

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Madame Chairperson and members of the committee:

My name is Allen MadPlume, I come to the Capital today from Browning to give you my testimony and I thank you for giving us this opportunity to share our stories. I was born in Browning and raised under the buffalo jumps along the Two Medicine River south of Browning.

Growing up there was the best playground any kid could ask for. Along with about forty head of ride-able horses to choose from to ride each day, we had the sandstone cliffs in our front yard, a cottonwood forest with a river and beaver dam full of trout in our back yard. My mother told me that when I first saw the front door open when I was in my stroller, my little legs went into immediate action to investigate. Before she could catch me I hit the doorway at top speed and went spilling out on to the porch. So then she puts a broom down in front of the door so she could leave it open and keep me in. After a couple days of that torture, I backed up my stroller to the end of the room and charged the doorway as hard as I could. The broom busted, I went sprawling onto the porch and was crawling away crying, trying to escape her grasp when she came out to fetch me. My first memory of this world was later that year during the summer. My dad said I was walking for the first time, I remember looking around, the sun was shining on a log house to my left, some tents to my right, trees with blowing green leaves behind them, and green grass every where I looked. But there was something fowling up this special moment, and that something was in my diaper, so I decided to get rid of it. Unfortunately there was a rooster in the area and when he spotted me up to no good on his turf he took immediate action and started spurring my legs and pecking my behind. I guess that was my first lesson in the 'pecking order' of this life. I would enjoy hundreds of adventures growing up there without ever getting bored throughout my childhood into my teenage years, unfortunately, I would also develop an addiction to the adrenaline that dangerous situations create, sometimes cheating death.

I was employed by Tamietti Construction at the time of my motor vehicle accident on Thanksgiving Day of 1995. I was 35 years old. I had just been promoted to carpenter foreman by Bill Tamietti on his bridge construction crew after only five months with the company. It was the job of my dreams. I never got to properly fulfill that duty because of a C5-C6 spinal cord injury which left me paralyzed from the neck down and limited use of my arms. The critical factor that caused this accident was alcohol.

I spent the next eight months in the Benifis hospitals and then four months at Park Place old folks home before I was blessed with the privilege of living in an assisted living apartment at Southwinds Estates in Great Falls. The management there was receiving funds for 39.5 hours per week for my PA services. After four years of recovery at Southwinds, I grew weary and stressed over always training new

employees, and the needless gossip constantly being passed between the resident assistants and the residents of their choice. I then made the choice to pursue an environment that I controlled by living independently and directing my own Personal Assistant services.

I have been living by myself in a Blackfeet Housing handicap accessible apartment in Browning since November of 2000. I have been directing my PA services without any major hitches and zero pressure sores since then. The only challenging issue with the PA service has been finding honest, reliable employees who can work with my split schedule for a reasonable length of time.

I started the self directed service through NCIL with 39.5 hours per week, 5.6 hours split into three shifts per day for seven days a week. After the Governor Martz Special Session in 200?, those hours got cut to 34.5 hours per week, 4.9 hours per day over seven days. I split those hours into morning, supper and bedtime shifts for each day. I need assistance transferring between my bed and wheelchair, with showering and hygiene care, exercising, toileting, dressing, cooking, house cleaning, laundry, shopping and medical escort.

I began receiving HCBS hours through the Easter Seals/Medicaid Waiver program in October of 2005. I used these hours to attend my son Roger's sporting events during his senior year in Browning, ending with the state track meet in Butte last May where he finished 2nd in the 100 meter dash and third in the long jump. He is now playing football for Montana Tech and I will have the opportunity to attend some of his games for the next three seasons. I have a 13 year old daughter whose events I dare not miss and their older brother is in his second year at U of M. I also use these hours to go out of town to shop and take an occasional ride to the mountains to restore the spirit. I consider myself very fortunate to be able to enjoy the privileges that these services allow, especially when there are never enough HCBS funds available to adequately serve the elderly and disabled in our communities throughout the state.

Without the PA services I would have spent the last ten years in a rest home. I know what kind of hell that was like, and I shudder just to think about it. The HCBS hours have served me well by getting me out of the house and back into the community on a regular basis. I don't know what the growing rate of the elderly and disabled requiring PA services in our state is, but I have a feeling its higher in my community due to the alcohol related accidents alone.

When you sit down to juggle the numbers for your budget, I ask that you consider the growing need in our communities for PA services. The money you spend on these programs will flow back into our local communities providing part time jobs that will not hurt our economy one bit. For us, it gives us the freedom that you all take for granted, to live a life making our own choices. It is money well spent.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for your time.

Allen McDermott
1/25/07